

REMARKS

The claims are 1 to 4.

The above amendment incorporates the features of claim 5 in claim 1. The significance of this amendment will become further apparent from the remarks below.

Claims 1 to 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Chun (U.S. 6,486,058).

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Chun (U.S. 6,486,058) does not teach or suggest a method as presently claimed that has a high ability to reduce the occurrence of defects and to improve throughput by way of bringing the treated substrate into contact with a remover solution for over 60 seconds.

Furthermore, in the present invention, the heating treatment to cause thermal shrinkage of the film of the over-coating agent is performed at a temperature that will not cause thermal fluidizing of the photoresist pattern. The temperature that will not cause thermal fluidizing of the photoresist pattern is such a temperature that when a substrate on which the photoresist pattern has been formed but no film of the over-coating agent has been formed is heated, the photoresist pattern will not experience any dimensional changes.

Performing a heat treatment under such temperature conditions is very effective for various reasons, e.g. a fine-line pattern of good profile can be formed more efficiently and the duty ratio in the plane of a wafer, or the dependency on the spacing between photoresist patterns in the plane of a wafer, can be reduced (See page 16, line 18 to page 17, line 21 of the present specification).

In contrast, the resist pattern overcoated with WASOOM (=resist-reflow buffer layer) in Chun reflows to shrink the size of hole openings. Thus, Chun does not teach or suggest the method employing the over-coating agent of the present invention.

For the foregoing reasons, it is considered that the rejection on Chun is untenable and should be withdrawn.

No further issues remaining, allowance of this application is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any comments or proposals for expediting prosecution, please contact undersigned at the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

Fumitake KANEKO et al.

By: Matthew M. Jacob

Matthew M. Jacob
Registration No. 25,154
Attorney for Applicants

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MJ/kes
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
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